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THE WAR WORK OF THE WOMEN OF ILLINOIS.

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(Read before the annual meeting of the Illinois State Historical Society, May 20, 1919.)

At the beginning of the war, the Council of National Defense in Washington appointed a Woman's Committee to have charge of women's war work throughout the country. In every State in the Union, a temporary Chairman was appointed who was asked to call together a meeting of all the women's organizations in the State and to elect their own officers.

In May, 1917, the heads of all the Women's Organizations in Illinois, gathered together, elected their Officers and formed the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, Illinois Division; I was elected Chairman. At the same time the Governor did me the honor to appoint me on the State Council of Defense and I was made Chairman of women's activities throughout the State. The two organizations were thus combined in one under one set of Officers but always kept their two names, which was found to be of great value on occasions. For example, when the legal adviser of the State Council of Defense gave as his opinion that all the money raised by the State Council's various committees, should be put into the hands of the Treasurer of the State Council and requisitioned out only by the State Council, it was a great comfort to be able to say that our money was raised under the name of the Woman's Committee, Illinois Division.

We were told in the beginning, to prepare for a long war and believing that organization was more important than anything else, we built a very solid foundation. From Cairo to Rockford, from Quincy to Paris, every County, City, Town and Township in Illinois added its unit, one by one, to make up the most complete organization of women that Illinois had ever attained. An organization including women of all classes, creeds and nationalities united in one democratic force, working under one standard: Win the War. We have in the State 2,136 local units. The work of the Committee was initiated as various needs presented themselves, until finally there were 18 full departments of the Committee, whose work was directed by 7,700 Chairmen. The active workers in these various departments, numbered 326,323. The Committee was housed at 60 East Madison Street, Chicago, in a large vacant store donated by Burley & Company but later moved into the State Council of Defense building at 120 West Adams Street, where it occupied an entire floor with several rooms on other floors. The State Council gave this space with telephone, heat and light, rent free and, in addition, furnished the services of two stenographers, postage and office supplies amounting to about \$1,000 a month.

After the armistice was signed the Committee gave up its rooms in the State Council of Defense building and moved into offices in the Fine Arts Building which will be kept open until October 1st, 1919.

When the war began we felt that one of the most important things to be accomplished was to take stock and find out how many women could be depended upon to render war service; we therefore asked women to register; FIRST—that we might know how many there were who could take the places of men as post women, taxi cab drivers, chauffeurs, census takers, elevator women, gas inspectors, etc. SECOND—that we could classify those who registered in order to call upon them for service. The Committee registered for war work 692,229

women. The Registration Cards [which were the same all over the United States but which were prepared by Illinois] were kept in every city and town where registration was taken and have been of great value in furnishing workers for Governmental Drives, for the Exemption Boards, for nurses in the recent influenza epidemic and for many other purposes. In Chicago alone, the registration was very small, compared with the State, comprising only 150,000 women, yet out of this 150,000 women, whose cards are kept in our office, 7,052 lists of women and the names of 17,000 individual workers were given to various War Associations asking for volunteers. In Chicago, 300 regular workers were provided for the Exemption Boards and over 300 nurses were at one time furnished the Red Cross, saving the situation and bringing help to the influenza victims, in one of the recent epidemics.

In Chicago, the Registration Cards were kept in the department known as the VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT AND FILING DEPARTMENT and as many as 18,000 calls a month were sent out by this Department. The women who registered offered every type of service, from the Stenographer who worked all day and offered to give every evening to help win the war, or the little cripple confined to her bed who, because she had trained a canary bird, felt that she could train carrier pigeons for the United States Army, or the woman who registered that she "Was willing but nervous and could pray if necessary" to the woman of wealth who offered her machine, her house and all her employees for the use of wounded soldiers. The registration in Illinois would undoubtedly have been larger if the women had received more education on the subject but, although there were 10,000 Registrars in Chicago alone, German propaganda hindered registration as there were repeated stories among the foreign born to the effect that if a woman registered she would have to leave her family and go abroad. For this reason the registration in Chicago was not as large as it should have been, yet the State registered a larger number of women than any other State in the Union except one.

The FINANCE DEPARTMENT raised most of its money in a democratic way. Every woman who registered was asked to contribute ten cents if she felt she could afford it and \$73,000 was raised in this way. Half of this amount was sent to the State treasurer and the other half was kept by the city or town where the registration was taken. In addition, nearly \$100,000 was raised by subscription or in business ventures. At one time, when the War Department was urging the use of potatoes instead of bread, the Finance Department put upon the streets of Chicago and in some of the towns throughout the State, packages of Potato Chips which they called "Liberty Chips" and these Chips, selling for five cents a package, in Chicago alone netted \$7,000 in three days. At another time a moving picture called, "Belgium, the Kingdom of Grief," was shown at the Auditorium. There were French nights, English nights, and Belgian nights and the net proceeds of the performance, for one week, was \$11,000.00. In addition, the Committee raised \$485,000.00 by Tag Days for various war and other charities and sold \$3,250,000.00 worth of Liberty Bonds. The expenditures to date have been \$97,793.98.

The SPEAKERS DEPARTMENT, numbering 300 women and 265 men, has sent its speakers to all parts of the State. They have attended 2,408 meetings and have reached 600,509 people, carrying the war message as an off-set to German propaganda, to even the most remote hamlets in the State. Of course, some of the requests for speakers were absurd; one Club wrote that they wanted "an atrocity sent them who would tell war stories set to music;" but on the whole, the demand for information was genuine and was sorely needed. At one meeting, whose subject was Thrift and War Saving Stamps, the opinion seemed to prevail that these stamps were something like the Red Cross Tuberculosis stamps and were to be attached to the envelope of every letter. At another meeting where the subject of Liberty Bonds was being discussed, a foreign woman arose and said she did not think it was right for the Government to put out these bonds, they were the kind her old man

bought when he wanted to get out of jail and she did not think it was right for the Government to make it any easier for him. This department will continue its work as the Speakers Committee of the Community Councils of Illinois.

At the beginning of the war we found that large numbers of women, most of them over 40 years old, whose husbands or sons had gone to the war, came to us for employment which was necessary in order that they might live. Some of the Officers of the Committee were so besieged with applicants, that it was found necessary to open an EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT. About twenty volunteers, women of experience, were put to work interviewing the applicants and it was a touching sight to see, in the waiting room of this department, as many as seventy-five women at a time, well dressed and with gray hair, all waiting for an opportunity to get some kind of employment. At first when they were told to go to the free employment bureau of the State or the Government, they would say that they could not as it was too humiliating but that they did not mind coming to a war organization to ask for help in this crisis of their lives. We have registered 9,082 such women and have found positions for 2,205. One of the first difficulties encountered in placing them was that they had had no training; they all wanted positions of responsibility and they all felt they were capable of filling them although they had never had any previous experience. One woman wanted to be put in charge of the keys of an Association and dozens of women asked for the position of office manager as they seemed to feel that this was an honorable position which did not require much skill. Many of them wanted to look after children and felt that they knew all about them, their reason being no better than that of the Irishwoman who had borne ten and lost nine. The majority asked for a position as housekeeper because, having kept their own home they seemed to feel that in this matter they would be experienced.

We found it was necessary to establish training courses in order that these women might secure such instruction as would enable them to take clerical and other positions. Training courses were therefore established in 65 cities of the State and 90 courses were offered in Chicago. These courses included Telegraphy, Filing, Indexing, Stenography, Home Nursing, Economics, Wireless, Motor Driving, Engineering, Dramatics, Story Telling, and special courses in the Public Evening Schools. Whenever there was a sufficient demand for a certain course of instruction a way was found to secure teachers and form a class in that particular study. Even after the armistice was signed, women and soldiers, who had had experience in telegraphy and clerical courses, still offered to give their evenings in order that they might train those who desired instruction. This department has paid a teacher in the Favill school for the Handicapped and given her \$1,500.00 worth of equipment. It also gave \$5,000.00 for the Bureau of Returning Soldiers and Sailors. This Employment Bureau met with such success that early in the war it was taken over by the United States Government who paid all its expenses but allowed the entire direction of it to be under the Woman's Committee, Council of National Defense and all its volunteers to come from that body.

In connection with this department it was found necessary to establish a MENDING SHOP for very old women, some of them over 70 years of age who were too old to take a regular position. This shop has been very successful, is nearly self-supporting and gives steady work to about thirty women. Its headquarters are in the Venetian building and it has now been placed under the management and is being supported by one of the large Clubs of Chicago.

The State Council of Defense has done a magnificent piece of work all over the State but its activities have largely had to do with questions concerning Military matters, Finance, Crops,

Labor, Business, etc., while the Woman's Committee has had more to do with women and children and with the practical details of the home; it has dealt mainly with human beings.

The CHILD WELFARE DEPARTMENT financed and managed by the Elizabeth McCormick Memorial Fund; has weighed and measured 325,000 children and has instructed the parents of these children as to their proper care. It has 1,000 Child Welfare Chairmen throughout the State and has put out 1,750,000 pieces of literature and 227,000 Window Cards, Posters, Buttons, etc.

This Department has succeeded in stirring up the State to the necessity of conserving its children, even the school boys became interested in the subject; one boy wrote a composition in which he said, "Now that we are at war, it is everybody's business to have a baby and to save it."

This Department has also conducted the "Back to the School" drive which was ordered by the President of the United States and it is making its work permanent by the establishment of Child Welfare Centers, Community Nurses, increased medical inspection in the Public Schools and the education of mothers in the care of children.

During the war the Government called upon the women of the country to practice conservation and our CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT has given throughout the State, in almost every town and city, demonstrations concerning substitutes for sugar and flour, the re-making of clothes and the necessity for the elimination of waste. It has been very difficult to get any figures from down-state and it would be impossible, in a short report of this kind, to give an account of the various cities where stores have been taken, demonstrations given, canning done, and other efforts made to conserve food for ourselves and our allies. In Chicago alone, 205,000 women were reached by these demonstrations, which were held in vacant shops, department stores, settlements and even on motor vans

which were turned into portable kitchens. One store at 28 North Wabash Avenue, was fitted up as a kitchen, demonstrations were held here every day and the articles cooked, sold for a moderate amount. This store alone, in six months, was visited by 60,000 people. The Vice-Chairman of this department was the head of the States Relation Service in Chicago and had her office with the Illinois Food Administration Department so that when an order was received by this department, from the Government, it was at once transmitted to this Vice-Chairman who gave it out to the city and the State.

The RECREATION DEPARTMENT tried to reach the girls of the State by forming them into Girls Patriotic Leagues. 12,000 members were thus enrolled; these girls taking a pledge which stated that they promised to do better than they had ever done before, the particular thing which they were then doing. Each girl wore a button and in different parts of the city, many girls were drilling as they wanted the physical exercise. Once a month, or oftener, these Patriotic Leagues held meetings where they had some inspiring speaker and, occasionally, 3000 or 4000 of them gathered together in the big auditorium of the Municipal Pier. This department was taken over by the War Camp Community Service of the United States Government.

The SOCIAL HYGIENE DEPARTMENT, just taken over by the State of Illinois, whose Chairman has been made Supervisor of Health Instruction for Women of Illinois, has had a corps of over 50 physicians who have given instructions to girls and women, in shops and factories, and have shown moving pictures called "How Life Begins" and "The End of the Road," etc., which have attracted large audiences to the State Council of Defense building. 54,000 women and girls have been reached in Chicago by this department and these lectures are being booked and the films shown in various parts of the State.

THE FOOD PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT immensely stimulated the raising of crops throughout the State. It issued primers for the school children giving instructions when and

how to plant in cold frames, when to plant in the open, how to raise vegetables, etc. It found, upon investigation, that only one out of every four farmers in Illinois, raised their own vegetables and an appeal was made to farmers' wives to start their own garden and "take their families off the market." This Committee had 110 School Gardens and 90,000 War Gardens manned by children reported to it.

Appreciating the fact that if the war continued, women must do the work of men upon the farm and that they must have some training, a farm of 250 acres at Libertyville, Illinois, was loaned us, rent free, where women were trained for agricultural and dairy pursuits. This farm had eighteen cows, hogs, sheep, chickens, etc. The girls all lived in a large new cow stable where the stalls were made into bedrooms, 76 girls were made into farmers; they drove a tractor, cultivated the land, planned the crops, gathered them in, made and sold butter and cheese and did all the work of a farm. 1,000 applications were received from girls who were interested and 40,000 people were addressed on the subject of agricultural pursuits. The equipment of this farm, including its stock, has been given to Blackburn College, Carlinville, Illinois, where an agricultural course for girls is to be opened.

Knowing that a Singing Nation is a Winning Nation, we have tried to arouse patriotism by Community Sings and 265 Liberty Choruses were organized through the State and 81,000 songs books have been distributed. On Thanksgiving Day, 1918, 125 Community Sings were given in the State and at stated intervals, the Community Choruses of Chicago, including a Children's Chorus of 1,000 children, met in the Assembly Hall of the Municipal Pier and gave most stirring concerts. This department has been taken over by the Federation of Musical Clubs.

THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT has bettered the condition of women and children in industry, throughout the State. It published a report on

Standards for Women's Work. It investigated munition factories and made certain recommendations concerning women. It has had an investigator throughout the State, looking after the interests of school children. It had made investigations where women were employed by the Government on woolen underwear. It persuaded one of the large railroads in Chicago not to employ women for handling heavy freight. It has reported on all violations of the Child Labor law and has had an exhibit on women in war time. The Woman's division of this Department has been taken over by the Woman's Trade Union League and the children's Division by the Elizabeth McCormick Memorial Fund.

THE WAR INFORMATION DEPARTMENT has supplied Public School Principals and others throughout the State, with war information. At one time, within a period of three weeks, it sent 143,000 pamphlets to its 500 War Information Chairmen. It has supplied the Public Schools of Chicago with over 10,000 pamphlets, has stimulated the Principals of these schools to have the children write essays upon certain subjects connected with the war and which in many instances, especially in foreign neighborhoods, have done much to bring parents to the realization of the meaning of the war. This Department has also supplied speakers and others connected with the Woman's Committee, with information concerning war work for women not only in this country but abroad. It has published several pamphlets on the subject and has sent out thousands of letters and circulars containing valuable information. This Department will be continued as The Information Committee of the Community Councils of Illinois.

THE PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT has not only managed the publicity for the Woman's Committee, getting articles in the paper every day, but it has sent throughout the State every week, a "News Letter" and, in addition, has published two camouflage Recipe Books, has awarded Prizes for sugarless puddings and candy and at one time, with the Conservation

Department, took a vacant store, made and sold over 4,000 pounds of sugarless candy. It has also conducted a "Do Without Club" of over 2,000 people. At one time it held a large meeting for the cooks of the city, at this meeting patriotic speeches were made and an attempt made to impress upon the cooks the necessity of conservation.

THE AMERICANIZATION DEPARTMENT, although organized late in the Summer of 1918, has conducted three Institutes for the foreign born; has had large meetings for different nationalities and has reached over 50,000 people. This Department will, in the future, be conducted by the Woman's City Club of Chicago, Federation of Clubs, and other organizations.

THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT has made connections between 1,516 volunteers and Social Agencies and it is estimated, has saved these Agencies \$100,000.00 which, if it had not been for the volunteers, they would have had to pay to their Social Workers. In addition, this Department provided wool for the "Shut-Ins" in Hospitals, Insane Asylums, Old People's Homes and Prisons, where the inmates, for the first time, felt that they were doing something toward winning the war. One cripple who had been on his back for thirty years, in the Poor House, was almost made over when he found he could knit socks for the soldiers abroad. In the Old Ladies Home, one old woman who had been in the habit of knitting all day and unraveling at night what she had knitted, in order that she might knit it over again the next day, burst into tears when she was told that she could have all the wool she wanted to knit into useful articles for the soldiers. This Department was taken over by the Central Council of Social Agencies.

THE ALLIED RELIEF DEPARTMENT raised for relief \$788,130.68 and has sent to Europe 705,140 Hospital Supplies; 182,035 Garments; 27,188 Kits and has adopted 8,844 Fatherless Children.

I want to take this occasion to make recognition of all the help which has been given to the Woman's Committee, not only by firms, who have given us, rent free, stores and offices, who have done our printing for nothing or at reduced cost and who have in every way aided and encouraged us, but I also wish to thank the individuals who have given us generously of their time and money and I want to express to every one of the women who have helped the Woman's Committee, my thanks for their loyalty and their willingness to cooperate.

The Woman's Committee of the State Council of Defense and the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, Illinois Division, will go out of business when peace is declared and proclaimed by the President of the United States or at least, as soon afterwards as it is possible to close up their affairs. However, the United States Government, through the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture and the Field Division of the National Council of Defense, are asking all the State Councils of Defense and all the Women's Committees throughout the country, to throw the strength of their organizations into Community Councils. Organizations in every town and city or in every ward of the larger cities, composed of representatives of every organization both men and women, will come together, form a Community Council and take up whatever work comes to their hand; it may be Clean Milk or it may be Clean Streets but this centralizing of the organizations of a town will prevent duplication of effort, will be democratic and will have a tendency to do away with the insidious propaganda which is spreading through Europe and which is even menacing our own country.

The Community Councils of Illinois have already been organized with headquarters in Chicago and a temporary State Committee of fifteen people elected by representatives from all over the State.

When we went into the war we saw in our mind's eye, the shell torn battlefields of France, the ruined villages, the deso-

late homes, the long dusty highways full of artillery wagons, gun, cannon, motors, ambulances and all the paraphernalia of war and that endless procession of khaki clad men who had crossed the seas to fight for the most righteous cause for which any Nation ever fought.

Nearly two years have passed since that time; two years full of momentous events and we know now, that those boys of ours with a smile on their lips and the spirit of a crusader in their hearts, went into the fight at the crucial moment and, by the sheer weight of their will to win, turned the tide and pushed back the foe.

Most of these men, thank God, are coming back to us, but some of them sleep in France. All honor to them and to the brave and noble dead of our allies. "They found their lives by losing them. They forgot themselves but they saved the world."

Toward the men who are returning, we feel a deep sense of obligation; they laid aside all the shams of life and dealt only with its realities. They learned all that sacrifice and suffering could teach; they understand the real meaning of fellowship and these men have today a vision of better things, a vision of a happier home, a cleaner city, a better State, a greater Nation. They have been fighting for Democracy but we will never have a real Democracy in this country, that Democracy of which we caught just a glimpse during the war when we were brought together by a common danger and by a common sympathy, until we once more continuously work together for the good of our community; until we learn to reverence, not the aristocracy of birth and wealth and position but only the aristocracy of service; until we can assure to every human being in our great Republic, equal opportunity for health, for education, for work, for decent living, for love, for happiness.

These men will look to us to help them realize their vision. Shall we fail them? The Community Councils of Illinois offer a method for this Democratic experiment. Let us try it.